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Fred. Olsen Cruise Lines recognises RNLI's 'Unsung Station Hero' with sunshine cruise holiday prize

75-year old retired cabinet maker David James, who stepped down at the beginning of the year as a deputy launching authority at Minehead Lifeboat Station, has been named as the proud winner of an eight-night cruise around the coast of 'Spain and Portugal' with Fred. Olsen Cruise Lines, who sponsored an 'Unsung Station Hero' competition to commend the tireless efforts of the Royal National Lifeboat Institution's (RNLI) crew members and volunteers around the country.

David first became involved with the RNLI as a shore helper, and progressed to become helmsman of the Minehead station's inshore lifeboat and, after leaving the crew, continued as one of the key station officials until the time

came to – reluctantly – hand in his pager.

During his years on the Minehead crew, David was involved in well over 150 rescues, and was commended for a particularly outstanding cliff rescue, when he cut off the lifeboat's anchor rope to lower a stranded walker to safety.

Mike Rodwell, Managing Director for Fred. Olsen Cruise Lines, said: "We were hugely impressed by David's record of voluntary service. As one of the world's major cruise lines, we appreciate the important role of the RNLI in helping to ensure the safety of those at sea, and we are delighted that David is such a worthy winner of this 'Unsung Station Hero' competition. With an incredible 57 years' service to the charity, David is to be commended for his dedication in all weathers, in dangerous conditions, at all times of the day, until the age of 74...and even then we hear that he was 'reluctant' to retire!"

"David should be extremely proud to be such an inspiration to new recruits, and we wish him an enjoyable and well-deserved cruise holiday with us."

David, who will be accompanied on the cruise by his wife, Pam, was one of several long-standing RNLI volunteers from around the country nominated for the prize.

Minehead RNLI Chairman Bryan Stoner said that everyone at the station was delighted that David had been selected.

"He's never shouted about his achievements and never sought any kind of recognition – just gone on quietly notching up the hours, days and years," he said.

"If you want to know what the word 'dedication' means, just look at David's record of service."

The RNLI charity saves lives at sea, and its volunteers provide a 24-hour search and rescue service around the UK and Republic of Ireland coasts. The RNLI operates over 230 lifeboat stations in the UK and Ireland, and has more than 160 lifeguard units on beaches around the UK. The RNLI is independent of Coastguard and government, and depends on voluntary donations and legacies to maintain its rescue service. Since the RNLI was founded in 1824, its lifeboat crews and lifeguards have saved over 139,000 lives.

Fred. Olsen Cruise Line operates in the UK with four intimately sized ships for a more personal cruising experience.

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